

the bird presented much the same appearance as a skin (21280 in Register, exhibited on this occasion) in the Museum collection, except that there were many more violet feathers visible.

The keepers I consulted bore me out as to the regular occurrence of the change of plumage in the male of this species; and one was of the opinion that the quills and tail changed also; but this I do not recollect seeing myself. Unfortunately this bird also soon after died, and was not preserved.

The existence of this change of colouration in the male of a *Coereba* is interesting as tending to confirm the views of those naturalists (Dr. Sclater and Messrs. Baird, Brewer and Ridgway), who place the *Coerebidae* in close connection with the Tanagers, in which group the male of *Pyrranga rubra* exhibits a similar seasonal alteration of plumage.



*Note on the Long-Snouted Whip-Snake (Dryophis mycterizans).—By F. FINN, B.A., F.Z.S., Deputy Superintendent, Indian Museum.*

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A common belief in India accredits the Whip-Snake with the propensity for deliberately striking at the eye. As this trait is not alluded to by either Dr. Günther or Dr. Boulenger in their accounts of the Indian Reptilia, I venture here to bring forward an instance which shows that the notion above noticed is really correct.

On December 1st, 1897, a bird-catcher, with whom I had previously had dealings, brought to my quarters two specimens of the Long-Snouted Whip-Snake (*Dryophis mycterizans*) for sale. Knowing them to be harmless, and the vendor having no fear of them, I took both in my hands and went to show them to a friend who was in an adjoining room; the larger one\* having meanwhile struck at my hand, without breaking the skin. As I was exhibiting the snakes, I was rather unpleasantly surprised by finding this large specimen suddenly dart at my eye, and inflict a bite on it, which, as I had instinctively closed the threatened organ, only resulted in some small punctures on the eyelids, which were just sufficient to draw a little blood. The position of these, two on the upper, and one on the lower eyelid, sufficiently shows, I think, the deliberateness of the reptile's aim. Of course I suffered no inconvenience from the bite, although on rubbing my eye

\* This stuffed skin of this specimen was exhibited, together with a sketch of the bitten eye made by the Museum artist, to show the position of the tooth-marks.

a few hours afterwards, I removed a tooth rather over  $\frac{1}{20}$  inch long from the puncture in the lower eyelid. This, however, after being examined under the microscope by Dr. Alcock and myself, proved not to be a grooved one, so that this little experience throws no light on the possible effects of *Dryophis* fangs on the human subject; I think, however, that it may be fairly allowed, in connection with the belief above mentioned, to upset the reputation for gentleness which Dr. Boulenger awards to the species.\* I may say that I was not holding the snake roughly or maltreating it in any way, and that when confined afterwards in a glass case it repeatedly struck at anyone who came near, seeming to aim particularly at the face, though it soon recognized, apparently, the futility of attacking glass.

This intelligence in attack was again shown subsequently, when, having transferred the snake to a large cage of wire gauze, I endeavoured to make it attack a Gecko. This it would not do even when the lizard was thrown absolutely in its face, darting open-mouthed at me instead. It similarly refused to bite a handkerchief with which I teased it, though I have succeeded in getting *Dendrophis pictus* (a black Andaman variety) to do this.



*Materials for a Carcinological Fauna of India. No. 3. The Brachyura Cyclometopa. Part I. The Family Xanthidæ.—By A. ALCOCK, M.B., C.M.Z.S., Superintendent of the Indian Museum.*

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The family *Xanthidæ*, as here defined, includes the *Canceridæ* (without *Cancer* and *Pirimela*) and the *Eriphiidæ* (without *Oethra*) of Dana's system.

It is a family which, as most authors have remarked, it is almost impossible to divide into groups that shall be at once natural and sharply defined, owing to the numerous intergradations of form that exist.

The Indian species of this family, so far as I have been able to discover, number 153, of which all but the following 14 are represented in the Indian Museum:—

*Carpilodes venosus* Edw., *Carpilodes margaritatus* A. M. Edw., *Lachnopus rodgersi* Stimpson, *Lophactæa fissa* Henderson, *Lophozozymus*

\* I hope this will not be taken as captious criticism of Dr. Boulenger's work, for which I entertain the sincerest admiration, especially since I know that gentleman to be in the habit of studying reptiles in life when opportunity offers.